



BODY GARD

I GUESS WITH A LAST NAME LIKE GARD IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT I WOULD FIND MYSELF DEDICATED TO PROTECTING OTHERS.

BY ASH GARD

I guess with a last name like Gard it was inevitable that I would find myself dedicated to protecting others. Living in a small rural town in New Zealand called Omarama (231 people) with an uncle as an All Black, like most kids, I idolised many celebrities and sports personalities from New Zealand and Australia especially legends like Sir John Kirwan, Terry Wright (All Black Wingers) and Australian origin greats like Mal Meninga. They were all great examples of how hard work can bring you to the top of your game. Even more incredible was that back then, Rugby Union was an amateur game meaning they weren't paid for the hard work they did. They all worked normal jobs but their passion for performance drove them to success, it was all for the pride and country. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that one day I would be rubbing shoulders with greats like these let alone be responsible for their safety.

30 years on I am proud to say thanks to my incredible brother and through lots of hard work we have been protecting these teams and hundreds of celebrities for close to 20 years. Although I keep this part of my career pretty quiet, I feel that it fuels my passion for Krav Maga and really helps me contextualise the realities of the threats faced daily in society.

It's easy to think that personal protection is all about brawn..... being able to fight and that size really does matter. Truth be told many celebrities do like to have burly looking bodyguards because often their size and presence makes them (the Celebrity) feel confident in their bodyguards ability to physically protect them. The basic principle when establishing sound security measures is deterrence through presence and if that was all that was required to ensure the safety of a client then we would never have any issues.

Tunnel vision and them cray cray people.



Check out this photo.....what do you see? Ultimately two good looking girls in the surf right! being watched by a few onlookers.

It is Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian (before Kim was known) frolicking in the water on Bondi beach.

Did you notice the guy on the left in the shades wearing the black top?

Most people won't. So that's Gardie my brother (ten years older than me by the way :)). He is Paris Hilton's bodyguard and at a moments notice Paris decided a walk down onto the beach and then to avoid the crowds a little, got in the water.

There is a phenomenon that occurs when people see a Celebrity - I call it the Shoe Sale Phenomenon, and just like a real shoe sale when people see something they want they will do anything to get it. Running, pushing, pulling even fighting to get there first. Like drinking Rum, it makes the nicest person do the most extraordinary things and turns them into a very 'unlikeable' character.

Click the below link and check out this vid. Although these people are being well behaved you can see this tunnel vision effect happen in front of your own eyes.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ0r2pl6dY4>

Here is the thing, no-one noticed or cared about her protective detail (Bodyguards)..... in the fans eyes they're not even there. Regardless of the Bodyguards size if someone wanted to physically attack her, or just latch on and not let go, nothing would stop them trying. So the question beckons, if it has nothing to do with size or presence of a protective detail how do we ensure a Celebrity's safety?

The answer lies in the old Special Forces saying of the 6 Ps for success.

PROPER PLANNING PREVENTS PISS POOR PERFORMANCE

So what the hell does that mean..... well its simple, Be a boy scout and be prepared. I get told all the time "you must be a real ninja to be able to protect people like that", but the truth is I train and plan meticulously to reduce the opportunity for bad things to happen.

Planning

Planning is the real skill of close personal protection. There are four main areas of personal protection:

- Hostile environment protection (military roles)
- Executive protection (Business / Prime minister roles)
- Family / children protection
- Celebrity Protection

Each have their own set of planning requirements. I would like to take two extremes, Hostile environment and Celebrity protection as examples to demonstrate the differences

Hostile Environment

A working example of this type of work is the protection of dignitaries, such as ambassadors operating in places like Iraq during war time circumstances.

This is a massive operation that requires support from every element of the armed forces. Ultimately during Hostile protective details the concept is to control the environment as much as possible but as you are soon to understand, this is no simple feat.

Firstly the residence and working area must be secured (often called the Green Zone). This means that a city CBD area must be permanently locked down by engineers that create massive walls, and chicanes to process vehicles and people in and out of the secure area. In addition 24 hour security must be established requiring hundreds of soldiers.

Then a protective detail (bodyguards) specifically for each dignitary must be established and a security force of infantry soldiers (a platoon of 40 people) protecting the immediate vicinity of workplaces (such as the embassy) and residences. These guys will conduct clearing patrols in the local area and supports movements between work places.

Any desired movement must be planned and coordinated with armoured transport that will travel in convoy protected again by yet another contingency of security forces. A ready reaction team is also on stand by to respond to any incident along with the support of combat medics and a hospital on standby. Air support is coordinated in case an emergency evacuation is required.

All of this is in place before the dignitaries leave the Green Zone. Routes are chosen at random to help prevent ground force attacks on route to the destination, however many of my friends have been struck by improvised explosive devices that require very little planning and often just one person to wait in place until a convoy passes then BOOM!!!!

As you can understand up until this point no combat skills have been utilised, planning and planning only has been put in place to reduce the opportunity for this to occur, yet occasionally catastrophes really do happen. Now all of those hours spent honing soldier skills come into fruition.

Secure the Ambassador/Dignitary, establish a perimeter and engage the enemy, look for and move to a more secure location

if needed, coordinate ground forces and communicate to the operations centre that you are in contact (because at this point except for those with you no one knows you have been engaged). Establish security and tend to the injured. Then wait..... for help.

And what happens if you are the only one left standing because everyone else is injured, in shock or dead? Yep that's right.... do it all yourself. I have a friend that deserves a medal for exactly these circumstance, so don't think it can't happen.

I have provided here a light summary of what is needed to protect dignitaries in a hostile environment. As you can appreciate this is a gigantic task with many moving parts and a stark contrast to a celebrity protection detail.

Celebrity Protection



Ash and Paris Melbourne 2016

You would be wrong to think that the planning phase is any less involved. The difference between the two are significant though and require specialised considerations those differences are:

- More often than not we cannot control the environment.
- We have no professional support that will come to our aid
- We are operating with between 1 (normal) and six (exceptional) operatives
- There are no shift changes - I am it (often 48- 50 hours straight)
- You can not be armed (too many plane trips domestically and internationally and it is illegal to carry for the purpose of protecting life)
- Client budget controls means and ability (staffing etc)
- The client will do whatever they want whenever they want.

There is no way in a hostile environment we would allow the dignitary to walk through a crowd of random people on the street, let alone go onto a beach randomly occupied by 30,000 people. In Celebrity protection that's the norm, their fame is by way of the fans and as such the fans must have the opportunity to interact with the Celebrity - their livelihood depends on it.

Prior to the Celebrity arriving the protective detail must survey every venue that the Celebrity is likely to attend. This include airports, stadiums, shopping centres, hotels, concert venues, restaurants and hospitals. Primary and secondary driving routes must be driven to ensure road works and timing do not inhibit client schedules.



Rolling Stones close protection team 2006

Often the threat to a Celebrity is not physical, usually it is about protecting their integrity and schedules. Imagine if the clients bag and phone was stolen that had the contact details of other celebrities and family members or they have a medical condition like diabetes or a heart condition for example. There is always the risk and constant threat of physical problems due to the Shoe Sale Phenomena as I alluded to earlier. The seemingly nicest person can become the most tunnel visioned and arrogant person on the planet. This is no different to the nurse that gets attacked by the patient while trying to help them, the paramedic attacked for trying to save their mates life and the retail assistant that gets abused by angry customers for no reason. My experience has shown that where there are humans there will be conflict and having the ability to deal with that conflict is the fundamental set of skills required in order to act confidently, professionally and appropriately under extreme stress and public environments.

Some of the skill sets required to perform a personal protection role are but not limited to:

- Understanding the law (huge one)
- Identifying aggression
- Identifying mental illness
- Responding to incidents
- Defensive and offensive driving
- Route reconnaissance
- Venue reconnaissance
- First Aid and self aid
- Planning and negotiations
- Escort formations and drill
- Understanding event security and crowd control
- Understand control room and CCTV operations
- Understand security screening protocol
- Shooting and weapons handling
- Self defence of yourself
- Self defence of others

This is an example of the types of competencies that a close personal protection operative requires to effectively perform his duty. Qualifications however are not enough, there must be the ability to operate strategically and professionally under high stress and the ability to not overreact. This comes with in my opinion two things, firstly experience working up through the various roles of close protection like, pre planning and advance roles, driving, escort team member, operations command roles, team leader role and finally the individual bodyguard position.

Secondly the ability to be able to protect themselves from physical harm. We get people asking all the time to be part of our team but our first requirement is the ability to demonstrate their effectiveness in self defence. Our philosophy is how can you possibly protect someone else from the worst case scenario if you are unable to protect yourself!!!!

I think the few things that have helped me work effectively in this very small industry are:

- a) I was fortunate enough to have an awesome mentor (my brother), who had me working in all facets of the security industry like mobile patrols, event security management and high management role for major events like the Asian Football Cup and the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.
- b) I worked hard to achieve as many competencies within the industry as possible including qualifying as a member of the Royal Australian Corp of Military Police Close Personal Protection team
- c) Krav Maga has given me the skills to feel confident when the worst happens, this allows me to operate effectively at levels that others find stressful and remain professional under high pressure situations. For me everything leading up to physical conflict is easy as a result of my training and this protects me and the client from embarrassment due to in appropriate actions.

Nothing has prepared me for this role like fatherhood. So far I have successfully kept my children alive in a world full of imminent dangers :) Hard edges they might hurt themselves on, heights they may fall from, people that may take advantage of them, friends that have hurt them and called them names and I have provided medical assistance under extremely emotional circumstances such when they crack their head on the floor tiles or get stung by a wasp.

Truly I feel that if I can protect two children that often do the must random and unforeseeable acts then protecting a Celebrity is not stressful at all! :)

Just like your safety, its too late if your not prepared when violence finds you, but by accepting bad things happen to good people like you everyday, a little bit of planning can make you significantly safer.

Be safe

Ash